

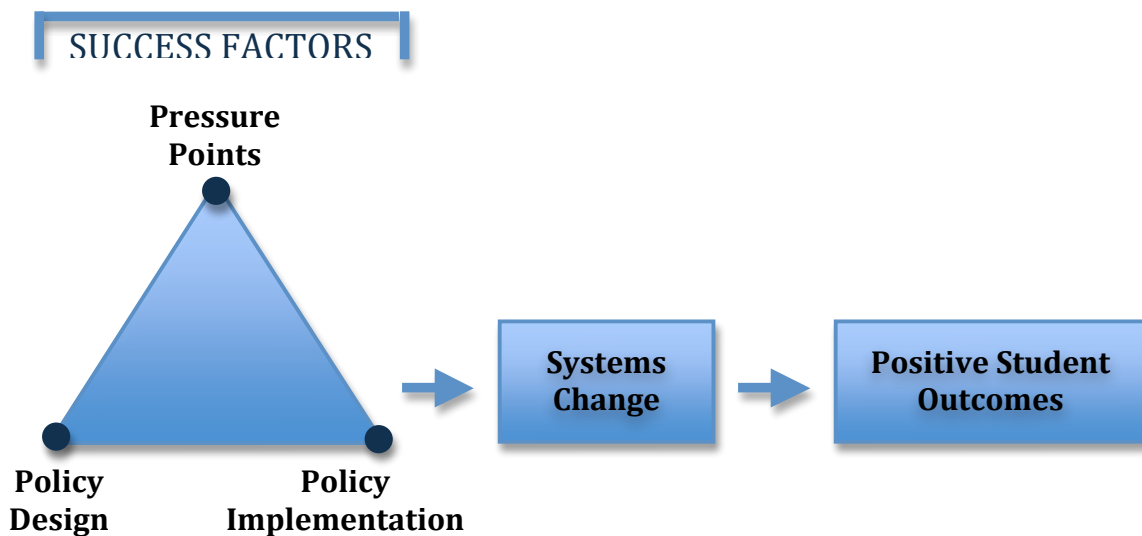
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High Leverage Policy Framework

We begin with a guiding definition of what constitutes a high leverage policy. A policy is high leverage if it achieves these two outcomes:

- 1) expanded learning and increased achievement or attainment¹ for all students
- 2) increased equity in learning, achievement, or attainment among students

The theory of action behind *high leverage policies* is that attending to certain success factors—specifically, **pressure points**, **policy design** and **policy implementation** factors--has the best potential to effect fundamental **systems change** which, in turn, leads to **positive student outcomes**.



Success Factors refers to a dynamic interrelationship among three dimensions:

- *pressure points* within the system (e.g., areas of leverage);
- *policy design* features (e.g., policy mechanisms); and
- *policy implementation* elements (e.g., local will and capacity)

Systems Change refers to transformational change that produces new forms of school and organizational work, which in turn also impacts the smallest unit of practice (e.g., classroom). Systems change:

¹ *attainment* includes: increasing grad rates, decreasing drop out rates, increase enrollment in college, reduce remediation necessary

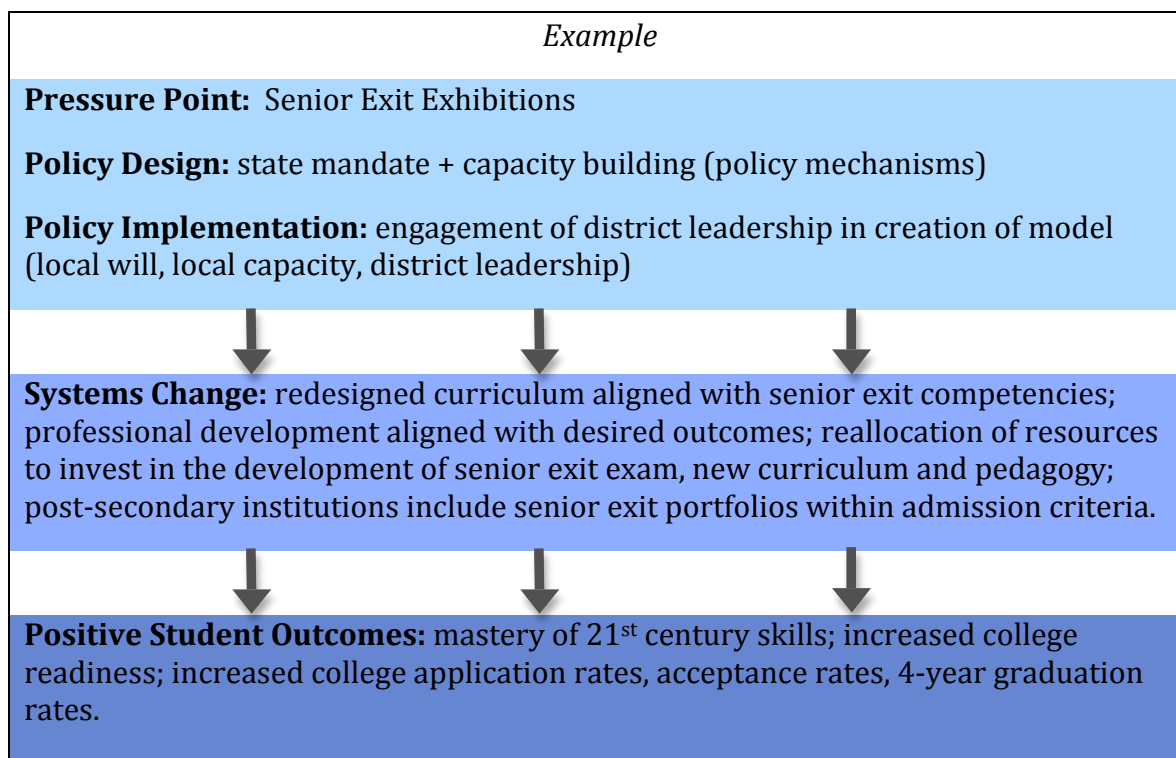
- creates shifts in the fundamental structures and systems of the organization and has a positive impact on the instructional context (teacher-student content)
- triggers multiple and multiplicative effects on the educational system

Positive Student Outcomes refers to the desired intent of policy. For example:

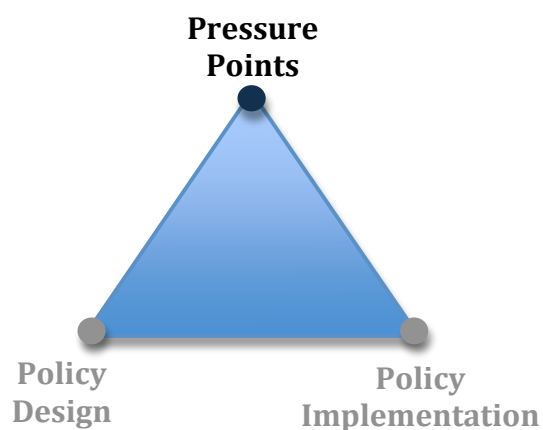
- mastery of 21st century learning skills
- higher graduation rates
- higher college attendance rates

How the Framework Can Inform Policymakers

As part of the policymaking process, policymakers should consider articulating the theory of action behind their policies. High Leverage Policymaking (HLP) attends to the three success factors, as well as the presumed effects on the entire system and on student outcomes. Policymakers should know which levers they are using to bring about which specific changes, and how these systems changes will result in improved student outcomes. Below we provide a hypothetical example that makes use of the entire HLP framework.

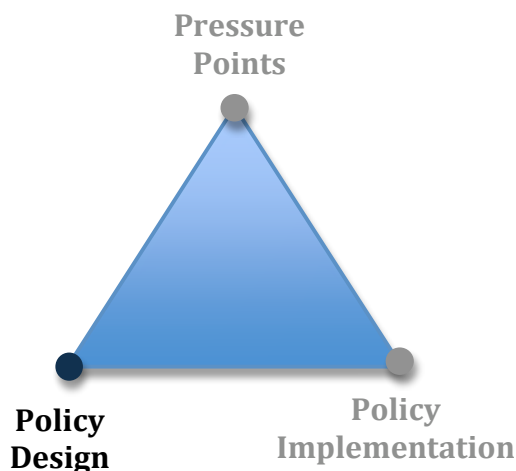


Ideally this scenario would be mapped out according to a theory of action that served to connect the individual parts.



Pressure points are points of leverage within the system that can bring about fundamental change in organizational behavior.

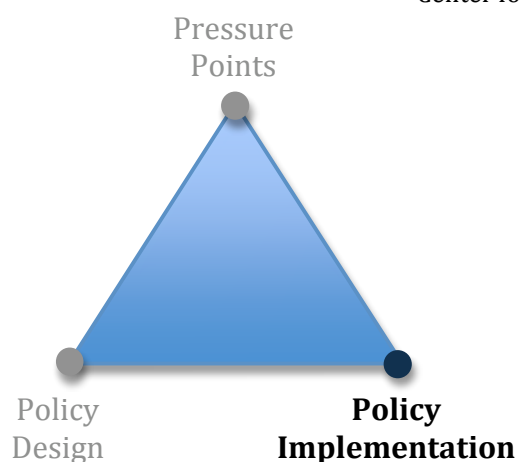
Potential Pressure Points	
Student Assessments	These represent assessments aligned with 21 st century skills. They integrate such skills and habits of mind into the assessments. There is an explicit shift in what is tested and how it is tested.
Teacher/Administrator Certification	Policies that line up certification with the demands of 21 st century teaching and learning.
Curricular Frameworks	Altering curricular frameworks to reflect 21 st century skills; example: National commission developing 21 st c curricular frameworks.
Early College High Schools	Creating articulation in learning outcomes and assessments between secondary and tertiary education (e.g., North Carolina)
Model Curricula, Replacement Units, Anchor Assignments	Model units are curriculum units that can be adopted or inform what this new curricula looks like (e.g., Connecticut); Replacement units replace standard units (e.g., the Cold War) into new model units that emphasize 21 st c. skills; Anchor assignments offer models that explicitly assess students on desired learning skills.
Senior Exhibitions	Exit performance demonstrations that often require portfolio products and presentations (e.g., Rhode Island)
OTHERS ???	



Certain features of *policy design* represent contributing factors to the successful implementation of policy. Design features that deserve particular attention include: policy mechanisms/instruments, pressure and support, policy scope, and coherence within and across policy contexts.

Contributing factors	Research cites	State cites
Policy Design Factors		
Policy Mechanisms/ Instruments	Existence of appropriate match of policy mechanisms (mandates, inducements, capacity-building, system changing) to target problems and mediating conditions (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987). States use multiple mechanisms to influence rather than direct control (Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990).	
Pressure and Support	Policy requires combination of pressure and support suited to the type of change the policy aims at creating. Pressure insufficient for changing attitudes, beliefs, and routine practices (Elmore & McLaughlin, 1982; Fullan, 1986; Montjoy & O'Toole, 1979; Zald & Jacobs, 1978; McLaughlin, 1987))	Includes accountability/pressure throughout system (VT, RI, NH, found)
Policy Scope	Ambitious and systemic policies more likely to stimulate teacher change and involvement than modest, narrow projects. Narrow scopes become ends of themselves, therefore serving as diversions (McLaughlin, 1990; Fullan, Bennett, & Rolheiser-Bennett, 1990).	
Coherence within	Coherent, sustained, change-oriented	Coherence with and

and across Policy Contexts	political process. Clune, W. (1991). States exert greatest influence when goals align with those of district or school (Furhman & Elmore, 1990; Zald, 1978); see also Abelmann & Elmore, 1990).	across Policy Contexts
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Policy implementation elements also contribute to the successful execution of policies and the achievement of their desired intent. Such elements include research-driven and practice-tested policy, district leadership, local capacity, local will, stability, and communication and sensemaking of policy intent.

Contributing factors	Research cites	State cites
Policy Implementation Factors		
Research-driven and Practice-tested Policy	Existence of research-based goals and working models of new practice and professionally accessible knowledge. Clune, W. (1991)	Grounded in research, an understanding of & respect for local practices, & prior policy (ME, RI, VT, found)
District Leadership	Active commitment of district leadership essential to policy success. (McLaughlin, 1989 & 90); Role as interpreter of policy key mediator in local implementation (Seashore-Louis, Ebey, and Schroeder, 2005)	
Local Capacity	The existence of capacity at levels needed to implement or respond to policy. (McLaughlin, 1987, 89, & 99; Firestone, Fuhrman, & Kirst, 1989; Abelman & Elmore, 1999; Zald, 1978); NB; Policy makers can support capacity building within policy (McLaughlin, 1990)	Supported by fiscal and capacity-building resources (e.g. high-quality professional development) (ME, VT, RI, found)
Local Will	The existence of motivation—initial or developed over time—to implement policy. Attitudes, motivation and beliefs underlying local response; (McLaughlin, 1990; Elmore, 1995) The degree to which policy is	Involves & garners support of multiple-stakeholders (ME, VT, RI)

	accepted and persuasive to those having to implement. (Desimone Et al, 2001; Zald, 1978).	
Stability—policy and people	Stability of policies and people over time influences level and quality of implementation (Huberman & Miles, 1984; Berends, Cun, et al, 2002)	
Communication and Sensemaking of Policy Intent	Degree to which policy’s message is accurately transmitted to target (Seashore, Ebey, and Schroeder, 2005; see also Zald, 1978); Policy is framed to promote “district and local sense-making” (Seashore-Louis, Ebey, and Schroeder, 2005). <i>NB: More divergent the policy from past practice, the mores sensemaking required to create will and capacity.</i>	Written & communicated through specific language (VT, NH)